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Blunt Assessment

New GOP House Leader Has Far from Stellar Record — Yet Loves to Point Finger at Others

By Michael Collins Piper

House Majority Leader Tom DeLay (R-Texas) was a frontline leader of the lynch mob that expelled former Rep. Jim Traficant (D-Ohio) from Congress in 2002 after the outspoken populist was convicted on what were clearly trumped-up corruption charges. Now DeLay himself has been indicted by a Texas grand jury on ethics violations and has been forced to step down as the Republican leader in the House.

Ironically, however, Rep. Roy Blunt (R-Mo.) — DeLay's newly elected replacement as the GOP leader in the House — has his own record of rather questionable ethics, a record which is all the more open to scrutiny since Blunt was outspoken in the successful campaign to expel Traficant from Congress, rising up on the House floor and giving an emotional (even hysterical) speech denouncing Traficant.

The fact is that Blunt is a "special interest" congressman in more ways than one. At the time Blunt was pushing an amendment to an Iraq war spending bill that would benefit the United Parcel Service, Blunt's son was a UPS lobbyist in Jefferson City, the capital of Missouri, where the congressman's other son is the governor.

Later Blunt was found to be trying to put in a last-minute provision into the legislation establishing the Department of Homeland Security that would benefit tobacco giant Philip Morris USA at the time that the divorced Blunt was involved in a personal relationship with Abigail Perlman, a Philip Morris lobbyist who is now married to Blunt.

Blunt's family members insist that they have not lobbied the congressman on the issue, but the ugly smell of sordid special interest politicking — and personal family benefit — prevails.

Although Blunt has not engaged in the kind of heavy-duty foreign junketing that his predecessor, DeLay, has been known for, ***The St. Louis Post-Dispatch*** reported on April 25, 2005, that "the most expensive privately paid trip Blunt has taken is to Israel, a journey he has made several times with freshman lawmakers. In 2001, the trip cost about $5,500, with Blunt's expenses paid for by the American Israel Education Foundation, an affiliate of a powerful pro-Israel lobby group."

The apparent — at least temporary — demise of DeLay and the elevation of Blunt also play into the ambitions of a rising House Republican star, Rep. Eric Cantor (RVa.), who is a deputy whip in the Republican caucus and outspoken supporter of Israel who has often been mentioned by the media as one who may ultimately be "the
first Jewish speaker of the House of Representatives."

Should Blunt continue to face scrutiny for his antics, Cantor's fast track toward the top spot might well escalate.

In that regard, some Blunt admirers questioned, earlier this year, why Cantor's congressional campaign web site featured the aforementioned St. Louis Post-Dispatch news article, which raised questions about Blunt's own ethics problems.

Although the article featured praise for Blunt by Cantor, some GOP loyalists felt it inappropriate that Cantor should have promoted the article on the Internet when it was focusing on negative details about his House colleague and their embattled associate DeLay.

A journalist specializing in media critique, Michael Collins Piper is the author of ***Final Judgment***, the controversial "underground bestseller" documenting the collaboration of Israeli intelligence in the assassination of John F. Kennedy. He is also the author of ***The High Priests of War***, ***The New Jerusalem***, ***The Judas Goats***, and ***Dirty Secrets***, all available from America First Books and First Amendment Books. He has lectured on suppressed topics in places as diverse as Malaysia, Japan, Canada, Russia and Abu Dhabi.

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